

Nursing home's new leader committed to changing County Health Care image

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David Laplante has been the temporary Sullivan County Health Care Administrator for about five weeks, yet he has already made great

Unity strides toward improving the facility's image and inner workings.

During a meeting on Monday Laplante took the time to stop and talk to patient Ken Pearson who has been at the facility for many years.

"He's kind of the mayor," Laplante said. "He knows everybody and is the guy with the answers."

Laplante took the reins when Landmark Health Solutions replaced Genesis Healthcare as the adminis-

trator of the nursing home.

The facility has recently been criticized for running over budget, failing inspections, staffing problems and having a low census — all costing taxpayers thousands of dollars per day.

On Monday, Laplante unveiled a proactive strategic plan to meet the changing needs of patients and residents.

"The facility has a whole lot of things going for it," Laplante said. "This is a wonderful place with a lot of good people. The facility is slightly behind its goals of where it wants to be, but it's certainly fixable."

As part of his plan Laplante will actively solicit feedback from patients, family members, staff and regional professionals.

"One of the bigger issues



CHRIS BERTLESEN PHOTO

David Laplante, the temporary Sullivan County Health Care Administrator, stops to greet patient Ken Pearson, known as the "honorary mayor" of the facility.

is our relationship between we can have a continuity of hospitals and physicians in care." Laplante said. As part of that care, the "With a strong relationship

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county is expected to begin construction next spring on an \$8.5 million senior community called The Meadows.

The 46-unit facility will be built across from the nursing home and provide residents full privacy with assistance when required. It is expected to be ready for occupancy in spring of 2009.

Special features include central dining with full meal service, housekeeping, laundry and a full-time on duty staff person.

"The intention is to keep this off the property tax," Gil de Rubio said. "This is a project that needs to stand on its own. We will have a healthy mix of people who can afford it and there will also be scholarship funding."

According to Michael Pulling, the project's planning coordinator, more than 17 percent of residents in the county are over the age of 65 and will need some type of care falling between a nursing facility and living alone.

"There's no question there is a market need," Pulling said. "People can remain active and have the opportunity to live more independently."

Inside the nursing home, several improvements have been made to make the residents' lives more comfortable.

"We have a newly renovated resident dining room," Laplante said. "The food is very important to the residents. I also eat here."

Upstairs there are 11 rooms being completely

remodeled for short-term rehabilitation patients. Two of the rooms are ready for occupancy and the remainder are expected to be completed within two weeks.

"The staff has done a great job helping," Laplante said.

Becky Trudelle, the unit manager where the renovated rooms are located, said her staff has been working hard and is ready for new patients.

"We've been working for a while and the staff is ready to go," Trudelle said.

Located adjacent to the front entrance is the family visiting room Laplante said is going to be renovated soon and will include a working fireplace.

"We want to make it more attractive for residents and their families," Laplante said.

Sullivan County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio said he is currently negotiating a new contract with the staff.

"There are a few things that need to be ironed out," Gil de Rubio said.

With all of the changes, Laplante is confident the nursing home will remain a place residents will want to call home.

"We are embarking on a change of strategy to not only maintain but improve the quality of care at the facility," Laplante said.

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